

WICHITA, KANSAS: SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 31, 1902.

DAVID MILLER'S  
77TH BIRTHDAYCelebrated in Wichita by a  
Family Reunion.

## STORY OF HIS LIFE

Interesting Light on Early  
Days in Wichita.

Yesterday at his home, No. 1099 North Lawrence avenue, where he has lived for thirty years, David H. Miller celebrated his seventy-seventh birthday with a family reunion. All the family were present and as a climax to the day's enjoyment the family, with "Yankee" Miller in front, were photographed.

Not the least interesting feature of the day was the recollection of old times, and as "Yankee" is of a reminiscence turn, he recalled many interesting experiences of early life in Wichita.

Mr. Miller has recently done a thing that all men at some time in their lives contemplate doing—writing a biography. He has written his own biography, telling frankly the story of his life, to the minutest detail. It is not for publication, but he intends to hand it down to his children and let it descend to the coming generations. This Eagle has seen a copy of the work, and in some respects, it is one of the very best self-light on life in early Wichita that can be found.

Mr. Miller was born near Hagerstown, Maryland, August 20, 1825. He was living a farm when the Civil War came on. Both armies chased each other over his fields, took his goods and made life thoroughly miserable. After the battle of Gettysburg he suffered so much from the military stress of affairs that he decided to go west. He went to Peoria, Illinois, and later to Kansas. He was in 1880. He bought a house at Topeka, and after 25 months sold it for \$500 and realized to come to Wichita. He writes of the journey here: "They packed their goods, hired two teams for thirty dollars, and with Dr. Longfellow, started, February 27. At the end of one day they landed on the Big Arkansas river, where plum bushes were all in bloom, March 3, 1871."

Continuing: "On the first day, after dinner, the tourists went in search of Wichita, which they found on the banks of the Little Arkansas, consisting of twelve little shanties and several dog-outs. All were occupied by wild-eyed frontiersmen, eager for prey. These big men with their revolvers strapped to their sides alarmed the tourists. Some were government scouts, in pursuit of a notorious desperado, Ledford. They finally cornered him in an outbuilding, and he received a shot in the back, he gave his last war-whoop and fell dead. This caused David Miller to make ready his old shot gun, believing himself in the midst of another war. And as darkness came down they lost no time in sheltering themselves from those long-haired Kansans. They found a place consisting of log shanties, as the Indians had just left for other reservations. They entered an old log house and took it for a temporary home. David made beds by driving stakes in the ground and laid sticks on these, and on these sticks they placed their comforters. They slept very well. The next day he went to the river and in search of land, accompanied by an old pioneer as a guide at 4 a day and board. They stood that charge just one day. The end of that day found them at a small place of twelve shanties by the name of Park City. They invested 25 cents in a dozen eggs and gave a cow at the restaurant. 25 cents for a loaf of bread, for a crust of bread, which made up their meal. They spent a sleepless night listening to the howling wolves. After their morning meal they set out for another village by the name of Sedgewick, which consisted of thirteen shanties filled with ruffians and cowboys filling themselves up with barroom and red-eye whiskey and practicing shooting, cigars and all the others' mouths. After seeing all this, David concluded to go back to his family, and taking shank's horse separated from the party and started at noon. He had twenty miles to go. Darkness soon came down on him, and hearing many strange sounds behind him, he put on the steam he had. The wolves around him and behind him kept howling, for a full meal or for the lonely traveler."

Mr. Miller goes on to tell how finally he saw a light in the darkness. It proved to be a cowboys' camp. The outfit was drunk and he increased his speed. He walked about in the darkness, making the twenty miles in five hours, which proves that he was going home.

Of the next day he says: "Every man of age was allowed 100 acres of land, to be paid for within two years at \$1.25 an acre and David had no time to waste, so he and his oldest daughter started out the next day in search of a claim. The noon hour found them about six miles north-east of Wichita. At that place they found two claims snaked off and attached to two stakes were the names of Taylor and Sam Jones, or the negro killer, as he learned later. As it was getting late they thought they had better retrace their steps. They reached home as the sun was sinking. That day's journey was pleasantly spent. The next thing was to find those two men, and at last he found them. They told him they had been to the government land office and had been granted their claims, but would turn them over to him for the amount of \$60 or so apiece. This he promptly took up. He then went to the land office at Augusta to investigate the matter and found that no one had ever taken out filing papers on them. He lost no time in filing on them at \$2 each. That was one of the games played on newcomers and greenhorns in those days."

Speaking of these claims, he had to make improvements on them to the amount of \$200 in the first six months. In the meantime he had bought of William Greifenstein the Indian trading post for \$20. He hired two teams for \$20 to haul those old logs out to his claim. Then David and another man, hired at \$1 a day, built the first house for many miles around, at a cost of about \$20. It was a story and a half house, fourteen feet square. There was no lumber in reach and it had to have some kind of a roof. At length they heard of J. R. Mead having cottonwood shingles for sale at \$25 per 1,000. He bought 2,000 at \$25. He

also bought 100 feet of pine lumber at \$3.50 per 100 feet. This completed his dwelling.

"One day when David was shingling his house," he says, "a horseman by the name of Dowe rode up and ordered him down off the house and told him that he had jumped his claim (another one of their games) and to get off immediately. This made David's hair stand on end. Things looked as though something was going to drop. He crawled down and made for a woodpile where he had a shot gun and a bullock revolver. He pulled them out and drew them on his caller. Dowe whirled his horse and spurred away."

Mr. Miller's house was completed by gathering dry grass, mixing it with dirt for mortar, water being carried a half-mile, and plastering up the big holes and cracks with it. This house was the first log house built between Whitewater and Wichita, except Dave Payne's, and it became a tavern for many a traveler and a landmark for many years.

Mr. Miller continues: "Then came the time for breaking prairie. He had scarcely enough to live on, but he hired Mr. Sam Crum and Mr. Taylor to break two acres for him at \$4 an acre. He then ventured to the end of his prairie-strings to buy two ox teams in partnership with Adam Longfellow, and also an old wagon, for \$125, or one-half the cost. He then had to have a plow, which he bought on credit for \$20. He lost no time in hunting and plowing from newcomers at \$4 a day. He soon earned enough to pay for his plow and a few dollars left to live on. He then began to break his own land.

He planted corn between the furrows of sod, he also planted broom corn, which proved to be far superior to corn in new ground. He then began to make brooms, having his oldest son, Harry, peddle them in the little village of 300 inhabitants. He was the only broom-maker for years, and as the town grew he found ready sale for his brooms, realizing from \$200 to \$300 from their sales annually.

Here Mr. Miller digresses to tell of a terrible prairie fire. It came up on a hot day, and great flakes of fire swept through the cracks of the house and fell on the bedding, but fortunately did not burn the family and the house. He says the height of the flames from the blue-stem grass was twenty feet at times. Further he says: "David had the opportunity of locating several homesteads and breaking hedge lines, and received \$10 to \$20, according to the amount of land broken, having the only ox team in that vicinity. He was not the only greenhorn there—others who paid for their whistles. By letting an opportunity pass, he made \$300, which changed the family's living from Johnny-cakes and black sorghum to wheat bread and coffee, for which they carried water from a well two miles distant. They had all kinds of game to eat except antelope, which David never could shoot. Buffalo meat was plenty; they used to buy it for two cents a pound. The buffalo were killed mostly for their hides, and would lay around on the ground for no one knows how long before they would be brought into Wichita to be sold; all the dogs in the country had all they could eat.

The broom business became overdone and David quit it and went to farming. He found that potato peddling did not grow, so he invested in a thousand sweet potato plants at \$4 per thousand; which also proved to be a failure. He then went to Topeka for four bushels of wheat, which with the freight cost him \$4. This he planted in 1871, the first year when spring wheat was raised in Sedgewick county, and he held by the old settlers. He harvested it in with a log. It grew to the height of about two feet, when the chintz bugs almost destroyed it, and caused him to cut it before it was ripe. He cut it with an old cradle, for which he traded a dozen brooms. He made his own rake and harrow, his son, raked it into sheaves and Mrs. Miller bound them. It was threshed by tramping a pair of ponies over it. The longer they tramped the tougher it got, and the more it wound around the ponies' legs. By holding it in the air and letting the wind blow the chaff out and scraping it up off the ground, he found that he had just four bushels more than he had sown. Then he started to the Augusta mills, about twenty miles distant, to have it ground into flour. When he reached there the miller told him that his wheat was too shrivelled; that there was not enough nourishment in it to make flour, and he finally traded it to him for a few sacks of cornmeal, which was only two cents a pound. They spent a sleepless night in that old mill. In the morning they started home with heavy hearts. They found sale for some of the meal on the road at 15 cents per pound.

Then David tried raising buckwheat, cutting and threshing it in a similar manner, which he found to be more profitable. He found ready sale for it at \$1.50 per bushel. He sold thirty bushels at this price. He also tried tobacco, which grew and yielded a new crop, but there was no market for it except for smoking. When he slept, which were numerous at that time.

Mr. Miller goes on to relate of the family's removal to town; how they acquired a tract of land which has since become the very center of the "wild residence portion of Wichita; how they built their first house, how the boom brought them money; how in that day they went back to visit the old places in the east; his battles with the city in putting streets through his place, and a hundred other interesting details.

Mr. Miller says he was designated "Yankee" Miller to distinguish him from other Millers. It was probably bestowed upon him because of his trading practices. He had ten years' subscription at \$2 a year to the Weekly Eagle once in \$200.

## THEY WHIP THE BEARS

In Yellowstone Park When They Get Mischievous.

General Corbin, who has just returned to Washington from a trip to Yellowstone Park, tells how some bears in the park raided the mountain house. "I investigated myself, and found that the bears had broken into the kitchen of the hotel, had stolen the butter of the hotel, and had been granted their claims, but would turn them over to him for the amount of \$60 or so apiece. This he promptly took up. He then went to the land office at Augusta to investigate the matter and found that no one had ever taken out filing papers on them. He lost no time in filing on them at \$2 each. That was one of the games played on newcomers and greenhorns in those days."

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THIS SUMMER  
MOST WONDERFULAlmost Perfect Regularity of  
Rainfall This Year.

## INTERVALS WERE SHORT

Between the Days of Precipitation in July and August.

Today ends a wonderful summer—the most wonderful Wichita has ever seen. July and August are the crucial months in Kansas. Regularity of rainfall, necessary to produce a maximum of corn, this year reached an ideal point, and barring one single run of unclouded days, almost touched perfection. In the two months, according to the table the Eagle has kept daily, which will vary little from the government figures, 10.30 inches of rain has fallen. Its distribution has been as follows:

Months	Inches
July 1	1.33
July 2	1.33
July 3	1.33
July 4	1.33
July 5	1.33
July 6	1.33
July 7	1.33
July 8	1.33
July 9	1.33
July 10	1.33
July 11	1.33
July 12	1.33
July 13	1.33
July 14	1.33
July 15	1.33
July 16	1.33
July 17	1.33
July 18	1.33
July 19	1.33
July 20	1.33
July 21	1.33
July 22	1.33
July 23	1.33
July 24	1.33
July 25	1.33
July 26	1.33
July 27	1.33
July 28	1.33
July 29	1.33
July 30	1.33
July 31	1.33
August 1	1.33
August 2	1.33
August 3	1.33
August 4	1.33
August 5	1.33
August 6	1.33
August 7	1.33
August 8	1.33
August 9	1.33
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August 21	1.33
August 22	1.33
August 23	1.33
August 24	1.33
August 25	1.33
August 26	1.33
August 27	1.33
August 28	1.33
August 29	1.33
August 30	1.33
August 31	1.33

That is in the sixty-two days of July and August there have been twelve days when there was rain, with unusually cloudy conditions in the interim naturally.

The intervals between rains during the month furnished interesting material. The first interval was of five days, and was broken by a big rain.

The second interval was of three days, and was broken by a big rain. The third interval was of nine days, from July 9 to July 18, and was ended by a small fall of fourteenth-hundredths of an inch. This, however, was immediately reinforced.

The fourth interval was of one day at the end of which sixteenth-hundredths of an inch fell.

The fifth interval lasted five days, when twenty-seven-hundredths of an inch fell. The sixth interval lasted three days, when on July 27, twenty-hundredths of an inch fell. The smaller rains from July 3 to the end of the month of July aggregated only seventy-seven-hundredths of an inch, but they made the summer what it was. For the month of July the total rainfall was 1.33 inches.

The seventh interval lasted twelve days and was broken by one of the big rains of the summer, 2.49 inches, on August 8.

The eighth interval was of twelve days, and was broken by a big rain of 2.49 inches, on August 30.

The ninth interval lasted two days, ending with a fall of ten-hundredths of an inch.

The tenth interval lasted one day and ended with a fall of twenty-six-hundredths of an inch.

The eleventh interval lasted seven days and was broken by a fall of .56 of an inch.

So September is reached with the ground thoroughly wet and ideal conditions prevailing for fall plowing. The immense corn crop, because of the variance in the planting-time was helped up to the very last. If any field of corn failed to produce heavily, other than rain conditions were to blame. In some instances early cultivating was prevented by heavy rains, and the weeds prevented a maximum yield. But it has been a corn summer. There was moisture at the start, moisture to invigorate the pollen, moisture at the silking period, moisture in the cob period, moisture in the filling period, and perfect weather for the maturing of the grain.

The rainfall in no two spots has been exactly alike. There have been rains in the county which Wichita did not get, and Wichita has had some rains that parts of the county did not get. But upon the whole, the different parts of the county will average alike.

In the last six months the rainfall, as registered in Wichita, has been prodigious. Since March 1, last, over thirty inches of rain have fallen.

The past summer has not been a comfortable one by any means. The humidity has made comparatively low temperatures oppressive, and when the mercury mounted above 90 degrees the effect was insufferable. Recently in the Eagle it was declared that August had been a cool month. Dr. Johnson said yesterday that it had not been cool; that it had been, emphatically hot; that it had averaged two and one-half degrees a day hotter than the usual August.

usual week's vacation from year's end to year's end.

The city is popular and there is a reason for it, and he who tries to make country men out of the city men will surely fail. For, after all, the city has compensations. The city is the center of life's splendid whirl, and to most of us the whirl is better than the country's splendid calm.

But—after the storm, calm! After the city, the country! If the city man would be happy at the end he must revert to the country.

A few years ago I was stricken with typhoid fever and for many weary months I lay in the hot bed of a city hospital. My only amusement was digging the black soot from ears and nostrils twice a day and watching the heavy sunshine creep round its circle from the window 'til night came, and the monotony, had no relief.

But at last I grew desperate. "I will go home," I declared, "home to my mother, to mother nature. In her arms she will nurse me back to life and strength. I shall die in this horrible charnel house of a hospital."

So they lifted me in their arms and gently carried me out to the carriage and onto the train, and in an hour's time I was breathing the perfumed breath that was always so grateful to me when each day I came from my work in the city. How my nostrils expanded and my mouth opened to drink it in! As I rode along in the carriage, how musical seemed the rustling of the leaves as the wind stirred them gently, how blue and cool the lake looked, and how clean the air felt! At last, when I fell back exhausted on my little couch in the upper chamber of the cottage among the trees, I felt that I lay safe in the arms of a beautiful mother, like a child on its mother's breast and murmured:

Fold closely, O nature,  
Thine arms 'round thy child.  
To thee only God granted  
A heart ever new—  
To all always true.  
And I prayed as he prayed:  
Ah! calm me, restore me,  
And dry up my tears.

I cannot remember in my life a moment more restful and perfect happiness. I had escaped from a charnel house, where the air was heavy with the odor of the dead and the dying, a place of death, almost a place of murder, and I was a guest in a chamber of God's own dwelling house.

Of course, the picture is an extreme one, and I am not going to be sentimental enough to push it too far. But, in a measure it may stand for the contrast presented by the city and the country. And, however we may love the whirl and the brilliant night illuminations, and the intricate sort of making money, or however much the sting of failing to make money may ever drive us on to sufferings yet untold in city life, still the time is sure to come to every one of us when we shall long for the caressing embrace of our first mother, that shall soothe us and restore us and give us the ability to plunge once more into the wild race with renewed hopes and fresh ambitions.

There are not many of us who would not appreciate a home in the country that we could go to when we were tired of the city. The trouble is, we do not know how to get it at reasonable cost, or how to make it enjoyable once we do get it. The country life is too good to be so disappointing after a week or a month.

There are several difficulties about country life. The greatest objection to much country living is the women and children get lonely and will not stay in the country. This is inevitable, and though it seems a trivial matter, it is one of the most serious of all. The other objection is the cost of the city. The trouble is, we do not know how to get it at reasonable cost, or how to make it enjoyable once we do get it. The country life is too good to be so disappointing after a week or a month.

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Lexington, Ky.	23.40
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Minneapolis, Minn.	14.70
New York, N. Y.	20.40
Philadelphia, Pa.	26.40
Pittsburg, Pa.	23.40
Zanesville, Ohio	26.40

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Marion, Ohio 19.40  
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